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## THE COLLECTOR

### NOTES AND NOVELTIES

ALL those to whom the cause of true and disinterested collectorship is dear should deplore the efforts of a daily paper of this city to cast discredit upon the auction of Mr. Brayton Ives' treasures last spring. As it will be remembered, Mr. Ives then offered, under the hammer, his entire treasury of art and bibliography to the highest bidder. The bidders were there, and they bid fairly high, though it has been hinted, not as high as they might if they had bid higher. At any rate, the auction went off with *éclat*, assisted by a young man, unknown, who created a diversion by going off with the overcoats of some of the audience during the excitement of the sale. Among the bidders and buyers was John Pierce, a bookseller of Nassau street, who makes a specialty of Elizabethan bibliography, and to whom the poor, unprotected tomes of Mr. Ives' library fell helpless victims at various figures. Mr. Pierce had, it was understood, from the lavishness, not to say recklessness, of his bidding, some orders to purchase from collectors, but it was known that some things he purchased without orders. The terms of the sale being cash before delivery, the supposition was that Mr. Pierce had bought and paid for the books in the regular way of trade, and that they had been delivered to him in *bona fide* exchange for the amounts checked off by the auctioneer's hammer and the recording clerk's pen.

\* \* \*

Some time after the sale Messrs. Dodd, Mead & Co. issued a catalogue in which some of the books from the Ives collection figured at lower prices than those which had been credited to them at the auction. Such is the base suspiciousness of human nature in the bibliographical world that this simple fact served to set afoot a great number of low and unfriendly insinuations to the effect, that there had been a discrimination in the manner of payment made in favor of some booksellers, and even that some booksellers had acted simply as agents of Mr. Ives in the protection of his unprotected treasures, cast upon the mercy of a callous collectorship under printed rules of public sale, as defined by the statutes of the Sovereign State of New York. It is needless to state that these insinuations were repelled with proper scorn, and the cause of pure and disinterested collectorship elevated its head and smiled the smile of conscious virtue, rectitude and honor, which scorn the wily arts of trade and the animadversions of scurrilous tongues.

\* \* \*

Last September, however, Mr. John Pierce fell a victim to the prevailing stringency in the money market, and his stock of books in the two small

rooms of the ancient building in Nassau street was sold by auction by the sheriff. At the beginning of the sale Commissioner MacLean, counsel for Mr. Brayton Ives, objected to the sale of several books on the ground that they were the property of his client. Mr. Pierce explained that he had bought them at the sale of the library of Brayton Ives by the American Art Association last May, and had given in payment notes which he admitted he had not paid. Counsel for Mr. Ives insisted that the books were with Mr. Pierce as on consignment. Here, then, was simply a difference of statement between a gentleman and a collector, and a tradesman—a question of veracity which might have been easily settled. If Mr. Pierce had given notes for the books, those notes would have defined his position. Commercial paper does not, like autumn leaves, dry up and blow away, although sometimes it might as well for all the good it does the holders. But Mr. Pierce's notes were not produced, the sheriff reserved Mr. Ives' books on the consignment theory, and the cause of pure and disinterested collectorship once more hung her head and waited for the clouds to roll by and the bookbuyers and booksellers to find something else to gossip about. At this juncture a certain journal, a member of that great guild which should be ever first and foremost in defense of virtue in distress, took the opposite tack, and in the language of one of Mr. Ives' friends, "all the fat was in the fire."

\* \* \*

It is sizzling there yet, and the question remains unanswered: if Mr. Pierce paid for the books in notes, why was he not allowed to sell them? and if he did pay for them in notes, why were not other buyers allowed to do likewise? If he paid for them in notes and Mr. Ives accepted the notes in payment, the risk was his and the books belonged to Mr. Pierce to sell, keep or destroy, whether he took up the notes or not. Moreover, if Mr. Ives sold his books, either for cash or I. O. U.'s, how under the sun could he have the same books to consign to the man who had bought them on his own account, to be sold for the account of Mr. Ives?

\* \* \*

Thus is it ever, that the intricacies of the law and the caprices of chance beset the path of virtue and ensnare the feet of innocence and probity, even as the metropolitan expert beguiles the good old deacon from Haytown, and the confiding agriculturist from Squashville, into the dark ways of the lottery-drawing in a back parlor, and the vain tricks of the green-goods myth. To make matters no better, Messrs. Dodd, Mead & Co. have written to the

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press to say: "We desire to state that no books were bid in at that sale for Mr. Ives by us. Whatever was knocked down to us we bought and paid for. After the sale we purchased a few items which, we were informed, had not been claimed or settled for by the purchasers. We bought those at what we considered their value, and if any of them appeared in our catalogue at less than the auction price, it was for the reason that we paid less than the auction price for them and had our own ideas as to their worth." All of which must bring warmth, comfort and a cheery spirit to the souls of those collectors who buy at auction sales for real cash, and who go to auction sales to make real bids and back them with real money.

\* \* \*

A valuable unique work recently picked up by Mr. Bouton is a series of 750 original drawings and sketches by Augustus Pugin, author of "The Antiquities of Normandy." The collection, in addition to all the subjects forming the plates of this celebrated published work, includes 680 other

original drawings, most of which are in no respect inferior in interest to those that have been engraved. In consequence of its comprising so many unedited illustrations the entire collection acquires a much greater intrinsic value than it could derive from consisting merely of the originals of the plates themselves. The sketches and drawings are mounted on drawing paper, and bound in 6 vols., folio, green morocco, extra, with borders of gold. They come originally from the library of Sir Jeffry Wyatville, and were afterwards in the possession of Sir W. Fite.

\* \* \*

Mr. Bouton, by the way, announces the receipt of the third volume of the great Spitzer Catalogue, of which he is the agent for America. This series contains the jewelry, stained glass, glass and glassware, cutlery, pottery and wood carvings of the museum, and in point of text and embellishment is of equal interest and sumptuousness with the volumes which have preceded it.

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